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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA AND PRM

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SUBJECT: GOJ RAPIDLY PREPARING SCHOOLS FOR IRAQI STUDENT
ENROLLMENT

REF: AMMAN 3352

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Ministry of Education (MoE) sent a letter to all public school principals on August 6 instructing them to allow Iraqi students to register in public and private schools regardless of residence status for the 2007-08 school term. Major Jordanian daily newspapers prominently reported the decision and the MoE's efforts to implement the GOJ's decision. The GOJ is now moving rapidly to prepare its public schools for the enrollment of Iraqi schoolchildren. MoE officials agreed to double-shift schools and begin site visits to select schools this week. UNHCR and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) are finalizing an agreement this week to transfer \$10 million to the GOJ to offset costs associated with the influx of Iraqi students. END SUMMARY.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

¶2. (U) The Ministry of Education sent a letter to all public and private school principals on August 6 informing them of the Cabinet's August 5 decision to waive residency requirements for Iraqi schoolchildren and instructing them to enroll Iraqis who register at their schools.

¶3. (U) UNICEF and local NGOs have divided up responsibility in efforts to mobilize Iraqi families to register their children. Save the Children has taken the lead on such efforts.

¶4. (U) Major Jordanian daily newspapers extensively covered the decision to allow Iraqi children into public schools on August 7. Front page stories ran on the English-language Jordan Times as well as the Arabic dailies Al Rai, Al Dustour, and Al Arab Al Youm. All referenced the GOJ figure of 50,000 Iraqi students entering Jordanian public schools and discussed the \$129 million UNHCR education appeal, though most neglected to mention UNICEF's co-sponsorship. Managing Director of General Education and Student Affairs Mohammad Okour was quoted as advising Iraqi families to "Immediately report to public schools and register their children, ready with the necessary official documents such as birth certificates and school certificates." Media reports claim that the GOJ estimates its average annual per pupil cost for students enrolled in basic, secondary or vocational schools is approximately JD 1,000.

DOUBLE-SHIFTING GOJ SCHOOLS

¶5. (SBU) MOPIC and UNHCR are finalizing an agreement they expect to sign by August 9 to transfer \$10 million to the GOJ to offset costs associated with increase Iraqi enrollments. Based on a draft budget provided by UNHCR, the \$10 million would be

spent during the period between August and December 2007 as follows:

--Teacher and administrative staff salaries \$4.32 million
--Minor refurbishment of double-shifted schools \$3 million
--Contingency (supplies, furniture, equipment) \$2.25 million
--School operational and maintenance costs \$.43 million

¶6. (SBU) Emboff, UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children met with MFA, MOPIC and MoE officials on August 6 and 7 to operationalize this GOJ decision. During the August 6 meeting, one mid-level MoE official expressed hesitancy on making decisions on behalf of his ministry. Nawaf At-Tal, Director of the MFA's Negotiations Bureau, immediately called the Ministry of Education Secretary General and scheduled a follow-on meeting for August 7 with all relevant MoE section heads.

¶7. (U) On August 7, Ministry of Education officials reviewed a list of 43 schools proposed by USAID for potential double-shifting and agreed to conduct site visits as early as August 9; a USAID contractor identified an additional 40 schools - raising the number of schools under consideration to 83. The MoE Secretary General responsible for finance and administration appointed two MoE engineers and planners from two education directorates in Amman to assist in prioritizing the current list of schools for double shifting. They expect to complete site visits by the middle of next week and will then rank the schools in order of suitability. Senior management in the MoE will determine the appropriate number of schools to be double-shifted. USAID is preparing a questionnaire and providing a technical expert to join MoE officials on site visits.

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SCHOOL SUPPLIES, TEACHERS, AND FEES

¶8. (U) Iraqi children who enroll in public schools will be required to pay the regular school fees for foreign students: 40 JD per annum for basic school (grades 1-10) and 60 JD for secondary school (grades 11-12) in addition to textbook costs. UNHCR is working to determine a process to assist the neediest families to prevent the costs from becoming prohibitive.

¶9. (U) GOJ, UNHCR and UNICEF officials estimated that 2,550 new teachers and staff members will need to be hired at a cost of approximately \$5 million to meet the additional inflow of Iraqi students. These numbers were incorporated into UNHCR's draft budget.

RENTAL SCHOOLS

¶10. (U) MoE officials estimate that the process of renting schools would require one to two months. MoE officials told Emboff that no suitable facilities exist in current government buildings (e.g. ministries or universities) that could be converted into temporary classrooms. For the moment, the MoE is focusing almost exclusively on the double-shift in preparation for the August 19 start date.

¶11. (SBU) UNICEF Emergency Coordinator Jon Cunliffe told Emboffs that he met with MoE supply and procurement managing director Maher Al Sabbagh on August 7 to discuss equipping schools for the additional influx of schoolchildren. Al Sabbagh commented that rented buildings will need to be equipped and furnished from top to bottom, which could raise the cost of the school rental process significantly. He also warned that the competitive tendering process may result in additional delays in readiness. UNICEF and MoE agreed to purchase supplies in phases, ordering no more than 10,000 of each item during the first wave of purchasing to avoid large stocks in warehouses and tying up UNICEF's financial

resources. Al Sabbagh noted that the MoE presently maintains a small reserve of school furniture, supplies, and textbooks. Hale